



## TIPS ON WRITING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Every day the newspapers are filled with articles and editorials concerning arson. As you read, notice how the issues are presented, and consider these three questions:

1. How do I feel about what is being said?
2. Is there information not contained in the article or editorial that is necessary to understanding the issue?
3. Is the information accurate:

The answers to these questions will help you decide how to respond to press coverage through letters to the editor. The editorial pages give you the opportunity to speak out on the arson and fraud issues that concern you. In a letter to the editor you can:

1. Correct inaccurate or misleading coverage.
2. Write to educate or inform readers.
3. Agree or disagree with a position previously expressed
4. Voice your opinions on issues you feel strongly about
5. Persuade readers to act in a specific way.

Here are some hints to help you express your views more effectively.

1. The influence of your communication depends on how well you make your point. Make sure that your letter is clear and concise. The reader may lose interest in a long, rambling letter.
2. Support your arguments with specific examples or statistical evidence.
3. Use your knowledge to help increase the public's understanding of the arson problem.
4. Don't insult or attack the reporter, the paper, or the author of the piece to which you are responding. The purpose of your letter is to correct inaccurate material or disagree with a person's view, not to personally offend the writer. A letter that is positive, reasonable and offers solutions or alternatives is generally more effective.
5. Proofread your letter carefully.
6. Remember to include your name, address and phone number. This is important because most newspapers will want to contact you to verify that you wrote the letter. The paper will not publish your address and phone number, just your name and association.